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THE

STORY OF AN AFRICAN BOY

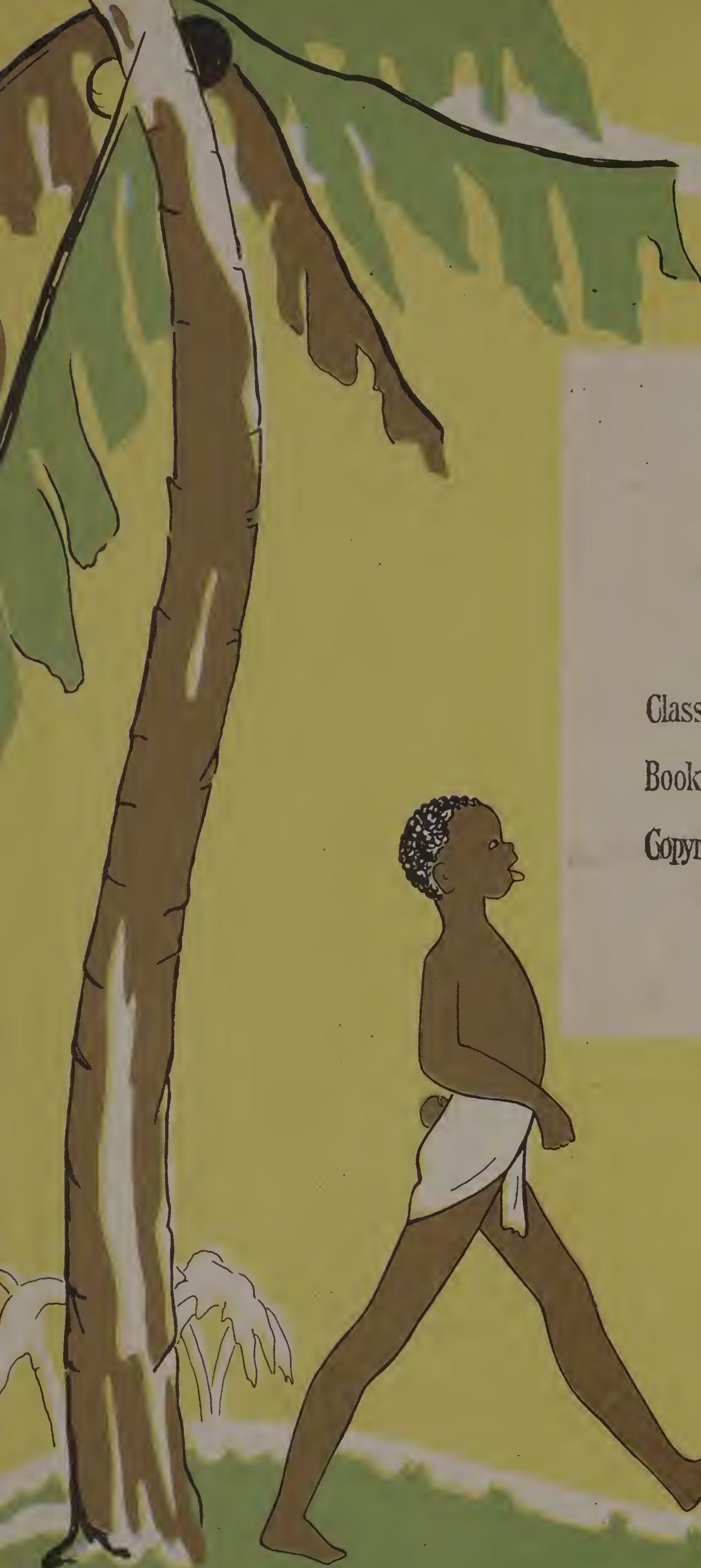


WRITTEN BY

JOSEPHINE VAN DOLZEN PEASE

DRAWINGS BY

ELEANOR MUSSEY YOUNG



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NIMBO


THE
STORY OF AN AFRICAN BOY

BY
JOSEPHINE VAN DOLZEN PEASE



DRAWINGS BY
ELEANOR MUSSEY YOUNG

JUNIOR PRESS BOOKS

ALBERT  WHITMAN
& CO.
CHICAGO

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OCT -1 1934

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INTRODUCTION

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“The story has a clever little plot, full of humor, and it possesses at once that delightful impetus which urges anxious readers ahead to Nimbo’s next exploit, and just enough arrested action to tantalize them into wondering uncertainty as to its outcome. I was glad (being a guide for the young) that after all Nimbo’s deviltry—which nevertheless makes delightful reading—he got his just deserts and was found out in his wickedness. Yes, I really like the little story, and think it would be a good one for telling.”

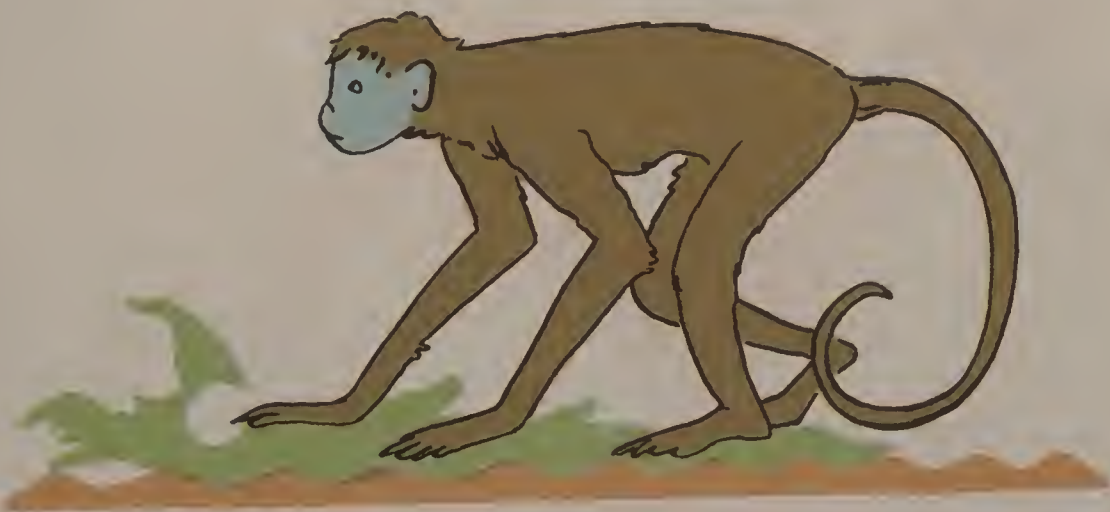
FLORA EMILY HOTTES,
Children’s Librarian,
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Nimbo sat at the door of his hut



ONE morning Nimbo sat at the door of his hut watching the monkeys swinging by their tails in the palm trees. He wore no fine Nose Plug Ornament in his nose and no splendid Alligator Tooth Necklace around his neck. There were no beautiful tattoo pictures on his arms or his legs or his back or his chest, and his girdle cloth was made of a miserable rag which he had traded for the skin of one





small snake. In fact, Nimbo was poor, very poor indeed. But he did have a calabash of honey. He knew how well his grandmother liked honey.

“Yes, I will take grandmother my calabash of honey!” he said to himself.

Nimbo found his grandmother sitting in front of her hut eating porridge.



“Grandmother,” he said politely, “I have brought you a calabash of fine honey,” and he handed it to her with a low bow.



“I will take my grandmother my calabash
of honey!”



His grandmother took the honey with many thanks and poured it into her porridge bowl at once, eating every drop as Nimbo watched. Much to her surprise when Nimbo saw his calabash really empty he began to weep aloud.

“Grandmother,” he wailed, “it is time for me to go home, and I must have my honey! Give me back my honey, please, so that I can go home!”

“How can I give you back your





His grandmother ate every drop of honey



honey!” exclaimed his grandmother. “I have eaten it with my porridge. It is impossible for me to give it back to you!”

Nimbo, however, would not listen, but only continued to weep and wail and plead piteously.

“This is a great business!” said his grandmother to herself. “What am I to do in a case like this? The boy is plainly going to weep forever if something is not done about it at once!”



She was unable to think of any other way out of the difficulty, so she was obliged to fill



Nimbo continued to weep and wail



his calabash with her best yellow corn. Before she could quiet his cries she had to give Nimbo enough for a whole week's porridge.

No sooner, however, did Nimbo have the calabash of corn in his hands, than the honey was forgotten, and he started on his way. When he reached his hut the hens were pecking hungrily about the door.

“How well my hens would like this calabash of corn!” thought





Nimbo saw the corn and started on his way



he. “Nothing would please them more!”

With that he scattered the corn on the ground before them. With a great flapping of wings and noisy squawking they began at once to enjoy the treat. Nimbo’s corn was soon eaten to the last yellow kernel.

“Oh,” wailed Nimbo when he saw what had happened. “My corn! My corn! My calabash of good yellow corn! Enough for a whole week’s porridge! Give me back my calabash of corn at once!”

“Impossible!” said the hens.





Nimbo scattered the corn before them



“Can you not see that we have eaten it to the last kernel? It is impossible for us to return it to you! How could such a thing be accomplished! Not even the Magic Man could manage such magic! You will have to make up your mind to it, Nimbo. Your corn is gone forever!”

Nimbo however continued to weep and wail and cry aloud, “My corn, my corn, my calabash of good yellow corn! My corn, my corn, my corn!” and would not be comforted.

When the poor hens saw that Nimbo intended to go on crying





“How could such a thing be accomplished!”

NIMBO

The title 'NIMBO' is rendered in large, stylized, brown letters. A palm tree is integrated into the letter 'N', and a small silhouette of a person walking is positioned between the first and second 'M's.

forever they were in a great flutter. Hurriedly they gathered together to decide what could be done.

“One of us must lay him an egg in return for his corn,” they finally decided. So the best egg layer in the company laid a beautiful white egg in Nimbo’s calabash.

With no more ado Nimbo dried his tears and started on his way again. As he was crossing a field

he came upon some boys playing ball.

“How badly you play!” he shouted.

“What can be the trouble? Surely there





Nimbo came upon some boys playing ball



must be something wrong with your ball.”

“What could be wrong with our ball?” replied the boys. “It is the best ball in the village.”

“But certainly such clever boys as you would not play so badly if you had a good ball,” continued Nimbo. “Here, use my egg for a ball and see how things go.”

The boys took the egg which Nimbo handed to them and hit it very hard with their club, breaking it into bits.





The egg broke into bits



“Well,” said Nimbo when he saw what had happened, “it is time for me to go home. Please put my egg in my calabash so that I may be on my way.”

“Your egg is broken to bits,” said the boys. “How can we give it back to you?”

At that Nimbo began to weep bitterly. “Oh, my egg!” he wailed, “my beautiful egg, laid for me by the best laying-hen in the village. Give me back my egg, please!”

When the boys saw how terrible was Nimbo’s grief they were





“Give me back my egg, please!”



very much frightened.

“What shall we do now?” they said to one another, gathering about the broken egg. “Something must be done, and done quickly.”

“I have some excellent staves for fence-making at my hut,” said one at last. “I will run and get them and we will give some to Nimbo in exchange for his egg. Perhaps then he will be consoled and dry his tears.”





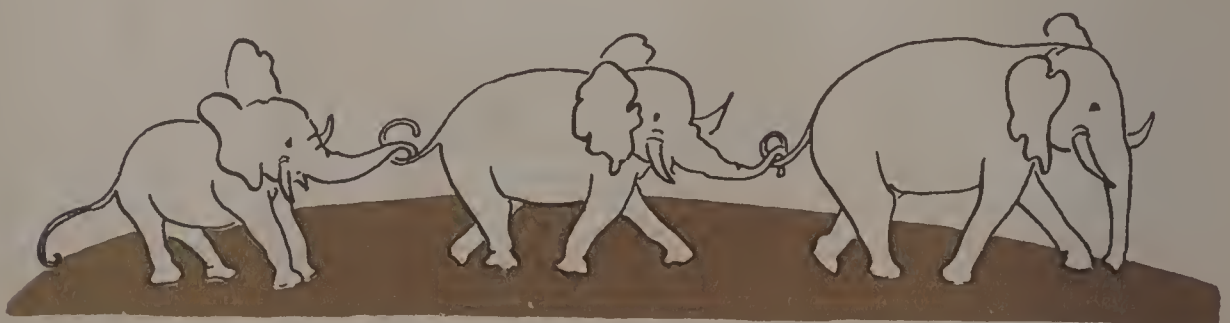
“Nimbo, take these staves in exchange for your egg.”



The boy ran quickly to his hut, and soon could be seen running swiftly back again, bringing the staves with him. All the while Nimbo cried more and more bitterly, until his eyes were swollen almost shut and no one would have known his face.

“Nimbo, Nimbo,” called the boy as soon as he was within hearing, “take these staves in exchange for your egg, we beg you. Take these fine staves and be comforted!”

Nimbo took the staves and went on his way without a word. At





Nimbo took the staves and went on his way



the edge of the jungle he came upon some elephants peacefully feeding.

“How strong you are!” he exclaimed. “You must indeed be the strongest beasts in the jungle!”

“Yes,” said the elephants, “we are very strong, certainly.”

“If you are so strong then,” continued Nimbo, “break these staves and prove your strength.”

The elephants took the staves and broke them with the greatest ease, looking at Nimbo with pride and pleasure.

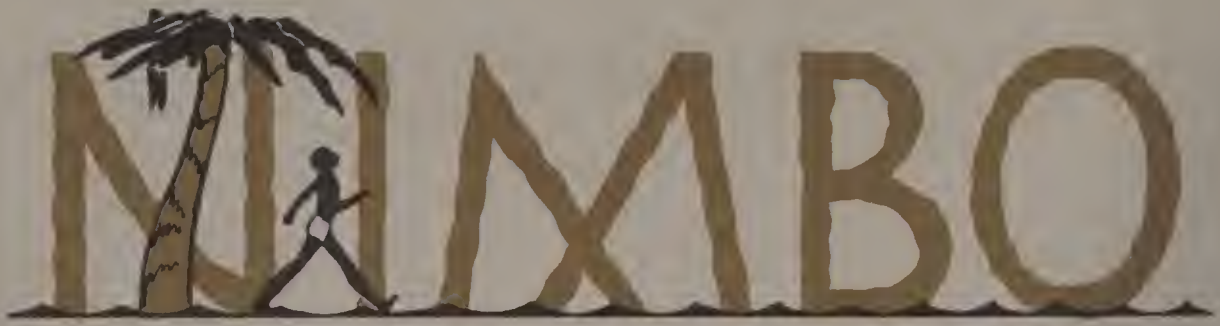
“Very good,” said Nimbo, “very good, indeed. You are very strong and there is no doubt of it. And now please give





The elephants broke the staves with the greatest ease

NIMBO

The title 'NIMBO' is written in large, bold, brown letters. A palm tree is integrated into the letter 'N', and a small silhouette of a person walking is positioned between the 'M' and 'B'.

me my staves and I will be on my way.”

“But we have broken your staves for a test of our strength!” exclaimed the elephants in great surprise. “How can we give you back your staves, Nimbo, when you have seen us break them?”

Nimbo then began to cry like one in agony. “Oh, my staves,” he wailed, “my excellent staves.

Give me back my staves!”

“But you suggested the test yourself!” said the elephants in astonishment. “We broke the staves at





“But you suggested the test yourself!”



your own word as a trial of our strength!”

But Nimbo paid no heed to these explanations and continued to moan and sob. “My staves,” he cried, “my staves, give me back my staves!”

The elephants now saw that the case was hopeless and that Nimbo would surely grieve forever for his staves.

“Well,” said the leader, “it is plain that we must give him our good sharp knife which we have been saving for a time of need.”

“Yes,” agreed the rest, “we must give him our knife in exchange for his staves.”

The leader of the elephants lost





“We must give him our knife.”



no time in carrying out the plan, and Nimbo stopped crying the moment he took the knife in his hands. He then walked away very fast, leaving the elephants watching him from the edge of the jungle.

Nimbo had gone only a short distance when he came upon some men under a palm tree skinning an ox. They had no knives for this hard labor but were using sharpened reeds from the swamp, and the work went very slowly.





He came upon some men skinning an ox



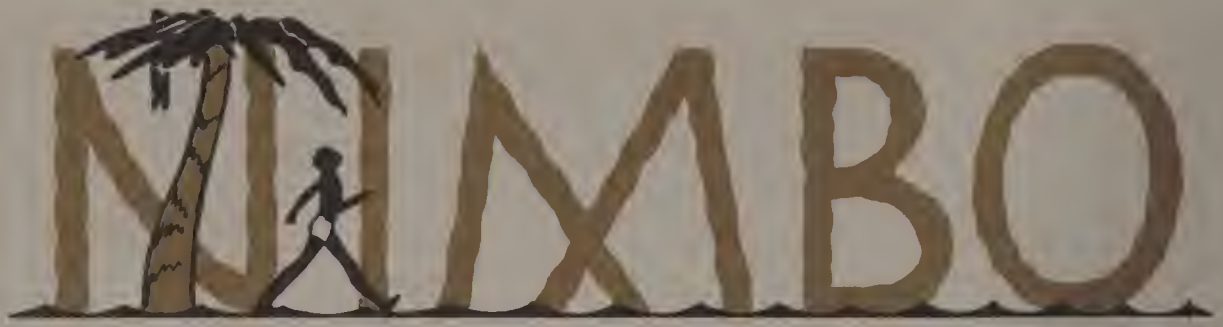
“Throw away those miserable reeds,” said Nimbo as he watched. “You can’t skin an ox properly with such poor tools. Toss them back into the swamp where they belong, and use my good sharp knife.”

The men were glad enough to do as he said, and had the ox skinned in no time at all. Then laying the knife on the ground at their feet they looked at their work with pride. This gave Nimbo just the chance which he needed, and he quickly picked up the knife and hid it under a mushroom.





Nimbo hid the knife under a mushroom



“Now I must be going on my way,” said Nimbo. “I am glad that I could help you finish the piece of work, and you must call on me again when you need me. But just give me my knife please, and I will be off.”

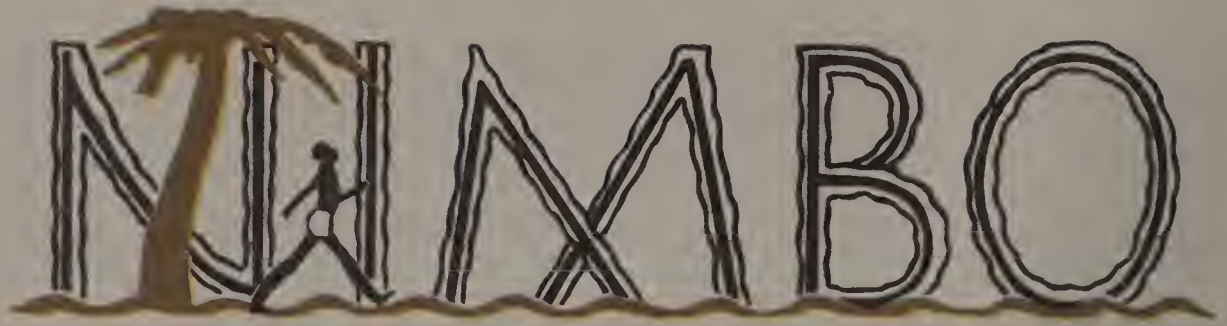
The men started at once to look for the knife. They searched diligently, making a great commotion as they did so. Each one accused the other of having been the last to use it, and the one to mislay it. But it could not be found.

“Where can it be, Nimbo?” they exclaimed. “We had it only





The men started at once to look for the knife



a moment ago. It is here, certainly. It is only necessary to pick it up from wherever it lies.”

But still it could not be found for all their looking and explaining. When Nimbo saw that the men could not find the knife, he began to cry until it seemed that he would cry his eyes out.

“Give me back my knife,” he sobbed. “I beg of you to give me back my good sharp knife! I loaned it to you out of the kind thought I had of helping you skin your ox, and now I beg you to give it back to me so that I may go home to my porridge!”



The men continued to hunt faithfully, but the knife could not be



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They continued to hunt faithfully



found in its hiding place under the mushroom.

“There is nothing to do but to give him the tail of our ox in payment,” they said sadly. “His knife is gone. He will never cease from crying unless we give him the ox’s tail in exchange for it, for it was surely a good knife, and very sharp.”

When the tail of the ox was safely in his hands, Nimbo’s face





Nimbo's face shone with smiles



shone with smiles, and he quickly walked on his way without a backward look.

A half day Nimbo walked in the jungle until he came to a large swamp. Here he stopped, and looking about him carefully to see that no one was watching, he planted his ox tail in the ground.

Just the very tip of it he left sticking up out of the mud, and then looking about him carefully, once more he began to howl with all his strength and to leap about and tear his hair and wring his hands as one in great suffering.

“Help!” he screamed. “Help!”





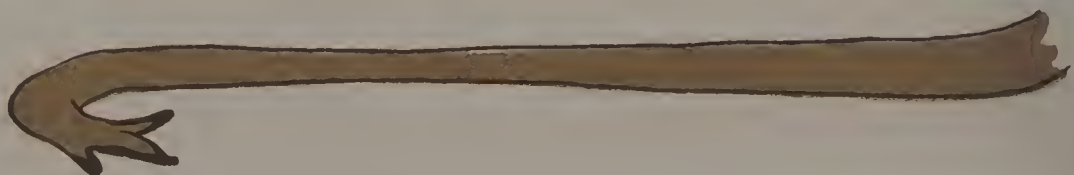
“Help!” he screamed. “Help!”



Help! Help! My ox is in the swamp! He is sinking! He is sinking in the terrible swamp mud! He is sinking so fast that only his tail can be seen! Quick! Quick! Come and help me pull him out! Help! Help! Help!”

So awful were his cries that people began running toward him from every direction until he and his ox tail were in the center of a great crowd.

“Poor fellow! Poor ox!” everyone exclaimed in pity. “How terrible!” And with tears of sympathy flowing from their eyes the men started at once to pull on the ox’s tail with all their might.





“Poor fellow! Poor ox!”

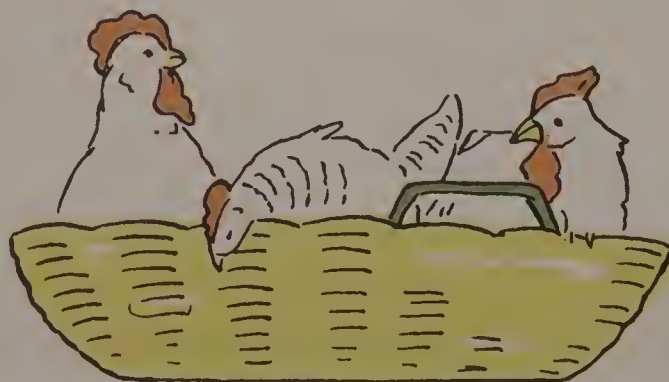


Never had they seen an ox so deep in the mud. It was astonishing!

Pull, pull, pull! Tug, tug, tug! One after the other every man tried, until finally with a mighty jerk up came the tail, but with no ox fastened to the other end!

The men stood speechless with horror, unable to believe what their eyes told them. What had they done? Never had they known of so awful a happening, and a deep groan came from every throat.

As for Nimbo, he threw him-





Nimbo threw himself upon the ground



self upon the ground before them. His face was hidden in the dust, and his cries were pitiful to hear.

“My ox, my ox,” he wept. “You have torn my ox in pieces! What shall I do? What shall I do? Oh, my ox, my mighty strong ox!”

Soon every one was weeping and wailing in sympathy, but no one knew how to pull the rest of Nimbo’s ox out of the mud, or to put him together again. Finally





Back he started through the jungle

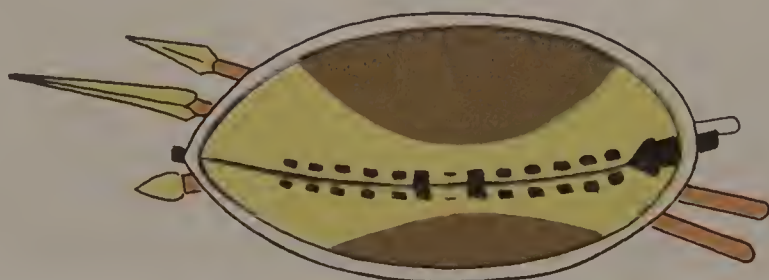


one man who had left the scene came running back leading by a rope a fine strong ox of his own.

“Nimbo,” he said, “do not weep. Here is an ox for you. Take this fine strong ox of mine, Nimbo, in exchange for yours.”

Then one by one all the men who had tried to pull Nimbo’s ox tail out of the mud came running to his side with an ox or a cow or a goat, or some other animal, hoping to heal his broken heart.

In a very short time Nimbo had a hundred head of cattle all his own, and the river of tears which





The people made him chief of the village

NIMBO

The title 'NIMBO' is rendered in large, brown, block letters. A palm tree is integrated into the letter 'N', and a small silhouette of a person is walking through the letter 'M'. The letters are set against a light background with a simple ground line at the bottom.

flowed from his eyes was dried.

“Goodbye to you all,” he said when his herd was safely gathered about him. “I must be hurrying home this minute. I should have been there long ago.”

Back he started through the jungle, a half day’s journey, his hundred fine cattle following him. When the people of the village saw him coming with his big herd, they gathered around him in pride and admiration for the honor which he had brought upon himself and upon them all.



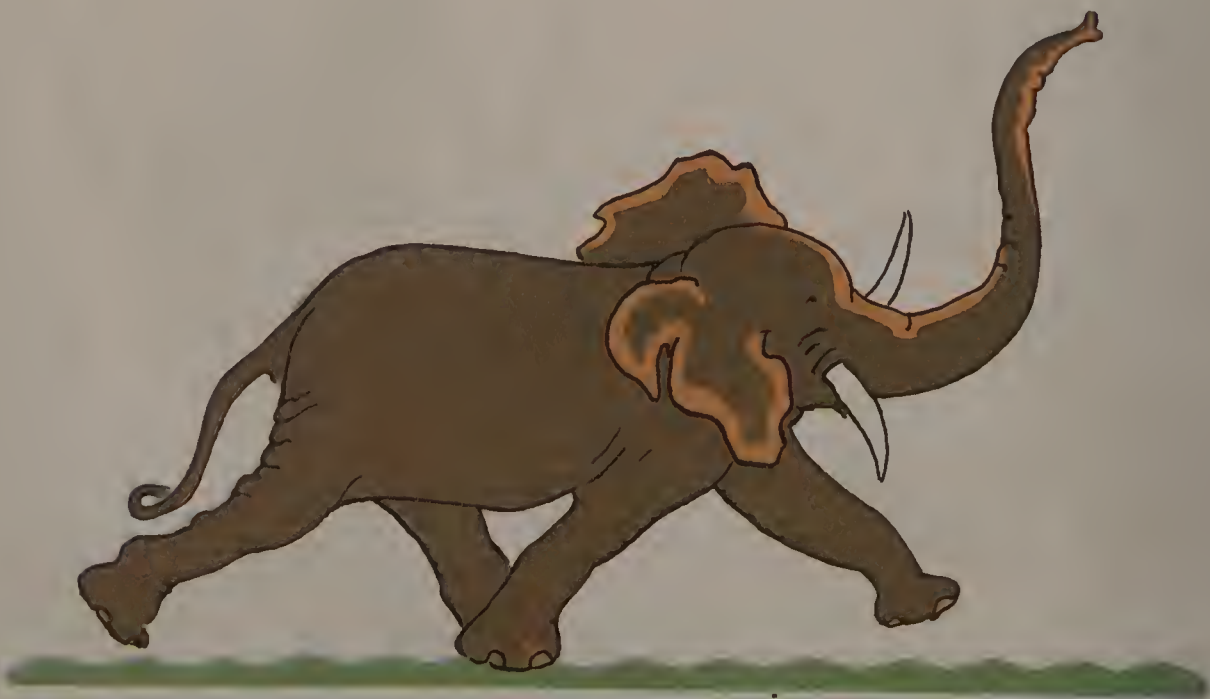


The elephants tore down his hut



They fastened the finest of Nose Plug Ornaments in his nose. They hung around his neck the most magnificent of Alligator Tooth Necklaces. They dressed him in a gorgeous girdle of red cloth. They built him a fine hut in the center of the village and made him the chief of the tribe.

But alas! Nimbo had been chief only a day when all the grandmothers in the village bewitched





Nimbo ran into the jungle and never came back



him! None of the hens would lay eggs for him! The boys mocked him and threw stones at him whenever he passed! The elephants came out of the jungle and tore down his hut, and the men from the land a half day's journey through the jungle made terrible war upon his people!

There was nothing left for Nimbo but to run away into the jungle and never come back.







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